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CORRESPONDENCE

A WORD TO MR. POUND

Sir:—

I have little Tuscan and no Provençal, but I seem to discern in your verse a slap at this "generation of the thoroughly smug." Therefore it was with pained surprise that I discovered you had taken some lines of mine as text for your phillipic, *Pax Saturni.* At first it seemed funny, then it seemed unfair; and finally I made up my mind that it was simply stupid.

My lines were ironical, you know. Of course you know what irony is, because you descend to it yourself in *Pax Saturni*; though I may be mistaken. How would you like it if I were to amputate

> Say there are no oppressions,
> Say it is a time of peace,
> Say that labor is pleasant,
> . . . .
> Speak of the American virtues,

and clap it at the head of an ode entitled *President Taft*? Wouldn't it seem ridiculous to you?

No, Mr. Aggressively Contemporary Pound, here in America very few people indeed believe that these are "fair, peaceful, happy days." And of course the event which I symbolize occurred very recently—Lincoln Steffens' magnificient try for peace during the trial of the McNamaras. Perhaps I wrong you, but no one else misunderstood my lines.

If your criticism had been one of poetic form, I should have respected it, at any rate.

I am glad you and Walt Whitman are friends. You ought to have known each other long ago.

John Reed.

LINES TO W. B.

What do we write of but the petty treasuries of little men?
Boxes of buttons for shirt-fronts and links for the sleeves,
Cigarette-puffs of sentiment, cigarette-cases of silver,
Gardens and streams that abound on the tables of restaurants
And mountains that amass in pigeon-holes!

Or we lie supine in a hammock
Humming fastidious news of the future,
Doubts of the present and hopes of antiquity,
Changes of passion as real as the rote of an actor,
Professions of fellowship wooden and stale as a pulpit.

We are evaders and strummers.
Our words are the popping of corks
And our lives go to settle the payment;
But there's something we call Greek, which we take like cloves for the breath.

And whom shall we call on, pray, to heed and to hurry our message,
But opera-chairs, limousines, and their occupants,
Women who earnestly nod over nonsense,